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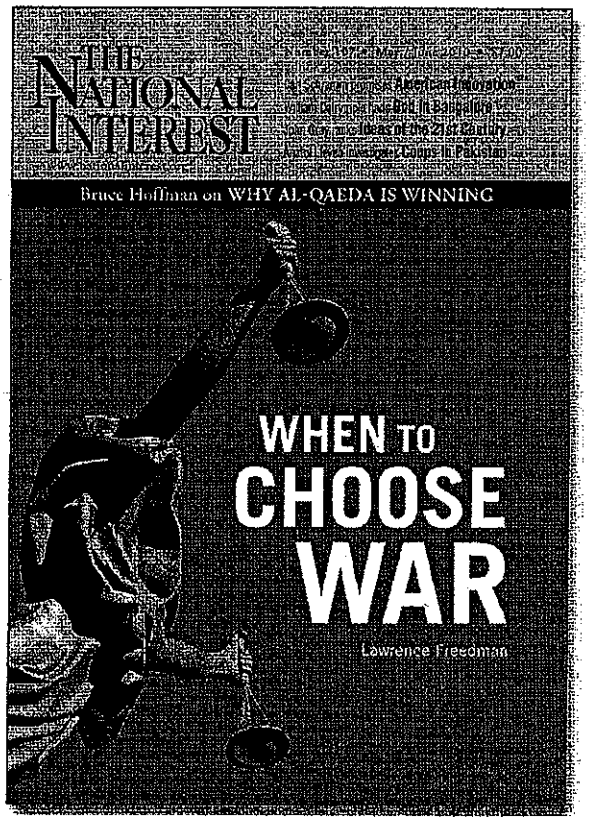

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American Jihad

By Bruce Hoffman

Last Christmas Day, the United States was just three minutes away from another tragedy of unmitigated horror. Once again, terrorists breached our security and nearly succeeded in turning yet one more passenger aircraft into an instrument of death and destruction. Had it not been for the malfunctioning of a cleverly disguised and detonated explosive device concealed in the bomber's underwear, and the alert passengers and flight crew who subdued him, America would have fallen victim to the worst terrorist attack since September 11, 2001.

The bomber, a twenty-three-year-old Nigerian named Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, had recently graduated from University College London—one of the UK's most prestigious schools. He defied the conventional wisdom about the stereotypical suicide terrorist being poor, uneducated and provincial. Not only did he hold a degree, he was cosmopolitan—having lived abroad, Abdulmutallab was at ease traversing the globe without arousing suspicion—and he was the son of a wealthy banker and former Nigerian government official. Abdulmutallab was radicalized, recruited, trained and deployed in remarkably quick succession—a rapidity that was also unexpected and thus surprised counterterrorism experts.

How and why he joined al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) remains a mystery. However, suspicions have continually focused on the role played by an American-born Muslim cleric named Anwar al-Awlaki who fled to Yemen some years ago.

Abdulmutallab's attempted attack shook the U.S. national-security structure to its foundations, prompting the most extensive government review of our terrorism defenses since the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security seven years ago and the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act that six years ago created the National Counterterrorism Center and Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

But, consider the following direct quotes from one of America's most senior counterterrorism officials, made at a closed meeting I attended in early January to discuss the Christmas Day plot and the state of America's preparedness for terrorism.

On our inability to foresee the attack:

> We thought they would attack our embassy in Yemen or Saudi Arabia. The puzzle pieces didn't fit into an attack on the homeland.

> There was no intelligence of an attack in the United States, despite the "noise" picked up in the Arabian Peninsula.

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> AQAP was looked upon as a lethal organization, but one focused [only] on the Arabian Peninsula.
>
> We were looking at FATA [the Federally Administered Tribal Areas] as the incubator of the threat. Not at Yemen.

On the ineffectiveness of the post-9/11 reforms:

> Information existed in the IC [intelligence community] that should have allowed us to identify him.
>
> It's not a technology issue, but an untrained-people issue.
>
> CBP [Customs and Border Protection] officers were waiting to arrest him when the plane landed because the P3B TIDE[1] protocol did not exist to pull him aside in Amsterdam.
>
> His name was misspelled by the embassy officer who flagged him, and we did not have the software to reconcile the two different versions of the same last name.

And, finally, on the state of our counterterrorism capabilities:

> We have an outstanding record of accomplishment, and the American people should feel good about what we have achieved since 9/11.

It is the same line of argument other administration officials have told the media and Sunday talk-show hosts ever since. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano initially enthused that the "system . . . worked really very, very smoothly." White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs similarly assured Americans that the administration was "tak[ing] our fight to those that seek to do us harm" as if that were sufficient compensation for one of the most serious breaches of U.S. security since the September 11 attacks. And, a front-page *New York Times* article on January 18, 2010, titled "Review of Jet Bomb Plot Shows More Missed Clues," was still reporting weeks later that "Counterterrorism officials assumed that the militants were not sophisticated or ambitious enough to send operatives into the United States."

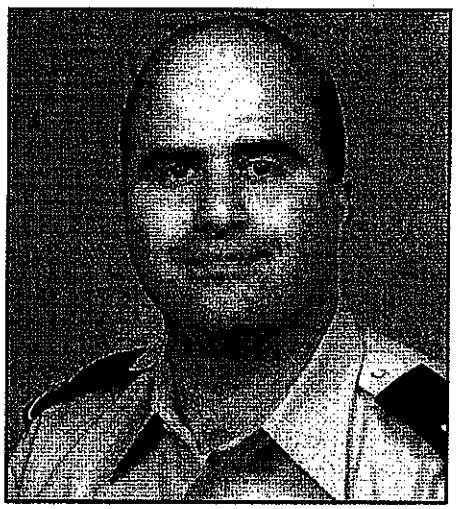
If Americans are dissatisfied with any of the above explanations, then they doubtless will be further discomforted by another *New York Times* article, recounting how Mikey Hicks, an eight-year-old third grader from Clifton, New Jersey, has been regularly subjected to secondary screening—including full-body searches and extended questioning—by Transportation Security Administration officials whenever he flies.

And if all this sounds, in the words of immortal baseball player and sage Yogi Berra, like "déjà vu all over again"—except that it's May 2010 and not August 2001—then the inevitable conclusion, of course, is that none of the government's explanations are even remotely acceptable. And even more alarming, despite Washington's assurances to the contrary, the homeland is not particularly safe.

The first cause of our current woes can be found in our geographically and tactically myopic strategies abroad. We seem able to focus only on one enemy in one place at one time. Gibbs demonstrated this in his post-Christmas-plot Sunday-talk-show appearance. "First, we're drawing down in Iraq," he explained, "and focusing our resources on Afghanistan and Pakistan, the places in the world where attacks have previously been planned, and where

[1] "Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment"—the list compiled by the U.S. intelligence community of persons it believes pose a threat to U.S. national security.

this planning goes on now." Putting aside the fact that there is no evidence that the Christmas Day plot was planned anywhere but Yemen, it seems clear that whether it was Iraq during the Bush administration, or Afghanistan and Pakistan now in the Obama administration, we rivet our attention on only one trouble spot at a time, forgetting that al-Qaeda has always been a networked transnational movement with an existent central leadership along with affiliates and associates and assorted hangers-on scattered across multiple operational environments. In other words, it is not a monolithic entity confined to one geographical area.



Our leaders have made matters worse by turning counterterrorism into a numbers game in their location du jour. Successive administrations now battle one another for bragging rights over who has killed more senior al-Qaeda leaders using unmanned aerial drones. The result is that, largely based on these numbers, senior Bush and Obama officials and their intelligence chiefs repeatedly trumpet al-Qaeda's demise when the evidence suggests otherwise.

In an interview with the *Washington Post* in May 2008, for instance, then–CIA Director Michael Hayden heralded al-Qaeda's "near strategic defeat" in Iraq and Saudi Arabia and cited "significant setbacks for al-Qaeda globally." Then, shortly after President Obama took office, senior intelligence officers were similarly quoted by National Public Radio claiming that the movement's ranks had been "decimated" and that al-Qaeda was "really, really struggling" as a result of what was described as "a significant, significant degradation of al-Qaeda command and control."

These upbeat assessments continued throughout last summer and fall when the intensified unmanned-aerial-drone attacks authorized by President Obama were credited with having eliminated over half of al-Qaeda's remaining senior leadership. "Al-Qaeda is under more pressure, is facing more challenges, and is a more vulnerable organization than at any time since the attacks on 11 September 2001," Michael Leiter, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, declared last September.

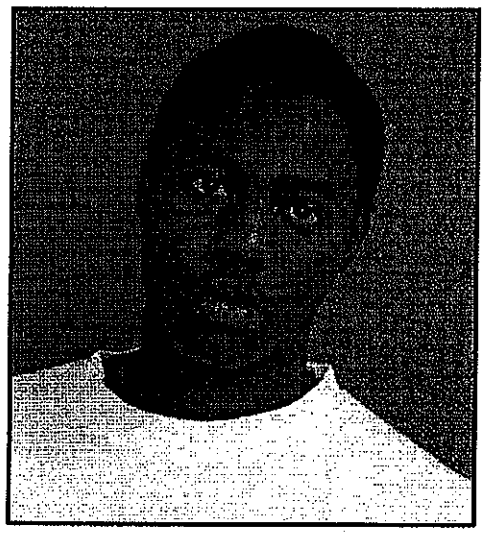
Then came the Christmas Day plot and only days later the suicide attack on a U.S. military base in Khost, Afghanistan, that killed seven key CIA operatives. Indeed, these developments, among others, prompted the director of national intelligence, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency all to agree in response to a question from Senator Dianne Feinstein when they testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence this February that al-Qaeda is virtually "certain" to attempt to attack the United States within the next six months.

Yet within weeks the administration was back on message when the director of the CIA, Leon Panetta, returned to the familiar claim that the Predator attacks "are seriously disrupting al-Qaeda." "It's pretty clear

from all the intelligence we are getting," Panetta stated in March, "that they are having a very difficult time putting together any kind of command and control, that they are scrambling. And that we really do have them on the run."

The operable assumption, like the infamous body counts that masqueraded as progress during the Vietnam War in the 1960s, is that we can kill our way to victory. Long ago, David Galula, a French army officer and arguably still today the world's preeminent expert on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, wrote about the fallacy of a strategy that relies primarily on decapitation. In *Pacification in Algeria, 1956–1958*, first published by the RAND Corporation in 1963, Galula explains how the capture in 1957 of the top-five leaders of the Algerian National Liberation Front, the terrorist-cum-guerrilla group that the French battled for eight long years before giving up in exhaustion, "had little effect on the direction of the rebellion, because the movement was too loosely organized to crumble under such a blow." Half a century later, he could just as easily be talking about al-Qaeda.

Israel, moreover, has similarly pioneered and relied heavily on the use of targeted killings for more than three decades—yet Palestinian terrorism continues. It eliminated Hamas's chief bomb maker in 1996; suicide terrorist attacks thereafter escalated both in frequency and intensity. In 2004, Israel assassinated Hamas's leader and founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and then just weeks later killed the movement's political head, Abdel Aziz Rantisi. Their assassinations would arguably be equivalent to the back-to-back killing of both Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri. Yet, even despite the loss of Hamas's spiritual and political leaders, the threat to Israel hardly diminished—and eventually prompted the Israel Defense Forces' massive ground invasion of Gaza in December 2008.



In the context of America's war on terrorism, a U.S. air strike in 2006 killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). As important and as significant a blow as this was, al-Zarqawi's death did not end AQI attacks and, indeed, following his killing, violence attributed to the group actually increased.

The above examples are not meant to imply that killing and capturing terrorists should not be a top priority in any war on terrorism. Only that such measures—without accompanying or attendant efforts to stanch the flow of new recruits into a terrorist organization—amount to a tactical holding operation at best. That is not the genuinely game-changing strategic reversal that attrition of terrorist leaders *in tandem with* concerted counter-radicalization efforts to hamper recruitment can ultimately achieve.

No one denies that the drone program has been effective in mak-

Al-Qaeda has accomplished the unthinkable—establishing an embryonic terrorist recruitment, radicalization and operational infrastructure in the United States.

ing the lives of al-Qaeda's leaders far more difficult by forcing them to pay ever-more attention to their own security and survival. It is, of course, essential to the war against terrorism. Rather, the point is to emphasize that a lone tactic has never proven successful in defeating a terrorist organization. And the drone program is just a tactic; it is not a strategy. At the end of the day, the unmanned Predator and Reaper attacks can hold al-Qaeda at bay and disrupt its operations, but they can neither eliminate the network entirely nor completely neutralize the threat that it poses.

While we concentrate on the battle abroad, believing that al-Qaeda is focused on attacking the United States overseas and that radicalization and recruitment within the homeland will never occur, we are creating the largest, most devastating blind spot—America.

During 2009, at least ten jihadi terrorist plots or related events came to light within our borders—an average of nearly one a month. By any metric, this is an unprecedented development. While many of the incidents involved clueless incompetents engaged in half-baked conspiracies, some of the plans alarmingly evidenced the influence of an identifiable terrorist command-and-control apparatus.

In some cases, these terror networks merely inspired individuals: there was the plot by four prison parolees and Muslim converts to bomb two synagogues in New York City and an upstate Air National Guard base; the attempt by a Jordanian national who overstayed his visa to bomb a Dallas office building; or a similarly far-fetched plan by another Muslim convert to bomb a federal courthouse in Springfield, Illinois.

But in other instances, terrorist groups either actively recruited individuals in the United States, deliberately motivated others to carry out terrorist attacks on U.S. soil or directed trained operatives in the execution of coordinated strikes against American targets within our borders. These network-linked incidents should concern us even more. Think of Najibullah Zazi, the Afghan-born U.S. resident arrested in Colorado last September who pleaded guilty to charges of plotting a "Mumbai on the Hudson"–like suicide terrorist attack on, among other targets, the New York City subway; the shooting last June outside a military-recruiting station in Little Rock that killed one recruiter and wounded another; and the November 2009 massacre at Fort Hood that claimed the lives of thirteen people. Both shooters—Abdulhakim Muhammad, an African American convert to Islam who had spent time in Yemen, and Major Nidal Hasan—had some connection to AQAP, the same local franchise of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda movement that was responsible for the Christmas Day bomb plot. And Awlaki, the cleric who had a role in radicalizing Abdulmutallab, is also believed to have played an important part in the radicalization of Major Hasan.

It is hard to be complacent when al-Qaeda and its Pakistani, Somali and Yemeni allies arguably have been able to accomplish the unthinkable—establishing at least an embryonic terrorist recruitment, radicaliza-

tion and operational infrastructure in the United States with effects both at home and abroad. Al-Qaeda's grasp is deep and wide. And it has also allowed them to co-opt American citizens in the broader global al-Qaeda battlefield. These accomplishments include the radicalization and recruitment of nearly thirty young Somali Americans from Minnesota who were dispatched for training in their mother country and the case of five young Muslim Americans from Alexandria, Virginia, who sought to fight alongside the Taliban and al-Qaeda and were arrested in Pakistan. Additional incidents involved sleeper agents like the Pakistan-born U.S. citizen named David Headley (who changed his name from Daood Sayed Gilani) whose reconnaissance efforts on behalf of Lashkar-e-Taiba, a long-standing al-Qaeda ally, were pivotal to the success of the November 2008 suicide assault in India; and both Bryant Neal Vinas and Abu Yahya Mujahdeen al-Adam, two American citizens recently arrested in Pakistan for their links to al-Qaeda.

While it is easy to dismiss the threat posed by wannabes who are often effortlessly entrapped and snared by the authorities, or to discount as aberrations the homicides inflicted by lone individuals, these incidents evidenced the activities of trained terrorist operatives who are part of an identifiable organizational command-and-control structure and are acting on orders from terrorist leaders abroad.

This succession of terrorist plots that unfolded with depressing and unprecedented regularity throughout 2009 is frightening indeed. More worrisome is that they have continued into 2010. During the first three months of the New Year, three more cases of homegrown terrorist recruitment in the United States had already come to light.

The first, in March, again involved a Somali American who was indicted in a New York district of the federal-court system on charges of raising funds for al-Shabab (an al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamic organization that controls large parts of southern Somalia) and with helping to recruit persons in the United States for the group. He is also alleged to have received training at an al-Shabab camp, including in bomb-making and bomb-detonation skills. The second involves a New Jersey man whose mother is Somali, but who hooked up with AQAP in Yemen. And the third is a somewhat-peculiar case involving two female would-be jihadis from Pennsylvania and Colorado. One of the women, a petite, middle-aged, blue-eyed blonde, used the online moniker "JihadJane" to recruit others in the United States and abroad, supposedly to carry out a terrorist attack in Sweden. She boasted in e-mails how, given her appearance, she would "blend in with many people." She in particular sought to recruit other Western women who looked like her. David Kris, an assistant attorney general in the Department of Justice's National Security Division, was quoted in the *Washington Post* as stating that the fact that a suburban American woman stands accused of conspiring to support terrorists and traveling overseas to implement an attack "underscores the evolving nature of the threat we face." Moreover, U.S. law-enforcement and intelligence officials are reportedly deeply troubled by the unexpected speed with which all of these people were recruited, radicalized and operationally deployed. The times are rapidly changing, and we are undoubtedly falling behind.

We have failed to acknowledge that al-Qaeda has a strategy and, moreover, that it is one designed to overwhelm us. It is a strategy of attrition. And it is a strategy of attrition that focuses on strengthening its own capabilities and expanding its recruitment pool, particularly on our shores, while

weakening our ability to fight. It seeks to flood already-stressed intelligence systems with "noise" and with low-level threats from "lone wolves" and other jihadi hangers-on (i.e., low-hanging fruit) that will consume the attention of law-enforcement and intelligence agencies in the hope that these distractions will allow more serious operations to slip by unnoticed.

The movement has repeatedly embarked on a concerted quest to defeat or bypass the intelligence and security measures we have put in its path. The liquid-explosive compound and ingenious detonation devices used in the August 2006 attempt to blow up seven American and Canadian airliners departing from London is one example of these unceasing efforts. The explosive concealed in Abdulmutallab's underwear, detonated by chemicals injected into it by a syringe, is the latest iteration of al-Qaeda's and its franchises' ongoing research-and-development efforts. Both were attacks directed against arguably the most hardened international target set—commercial aviation. These two tactical innovations are part and parcel of al-Qaeda's new strategy.

The organization is supported by the aggressive efforts of As-Sahab, "the Clouds," its perennially active communications arm, which has critical "input" capabilities (e.g., gathering strategic intelligence) in addition to its better-known "output" functions (e.g., the production and dissemination of propaganda). In this respect, al-Qaeda and its agents are constantly monitoring our defenses: seeking to identify gaps and new opportunities that can be quickly and effectively exploited for attacks.

A key additional dimension of al-Qaeda's strategy is economic warfare. "We will bury you!" Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev promised Americans fifty years ago. Today, al-Qaeda claims that "we will bankrupt you." Al-Qaeda has always maintained that the United States is too powerful to be defeated militarily. Instead, it seeks to undermine our economy. Given the continued financial instability both here and abroad, al-Qaeda likely believes this strategy of attrition will pay still-more dividends in the future. Over the past year, al-Qaeda's web sites have carried repeated statements, videos, audio messages, letters and press releases trumpeting its role in creating the current global economic crisis.

But even as al-Qaeda is proactively finding new ways to exploit our weaknesses, we are stuck in a pattern of belatedly responding to its moves rather than developing new anticipatory and preemptive strategies of our own. The "systemic failure" of intelligence analysis and airport security that President Obama described in the wake of the foiled Christmas Day attack was not just the product of a compartmentalized bureaucracy or analytical oversight; it was a reflection of our failure to recognize al-Qaeda's new strategy and to devise appropriate measures to counter it.

During 2009, at least ten jihadi terrorist plots or related events came to light within our borders—an average of nearly one a month. By any metric, this is an unprecedented development.

Bottom line: we do not understand our enemy. It has become a cliché in the war on terrorism to invoke the ancient Chinese philosopher-warrior Sun Tzu's dictum "if you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles." Military tactics, as Sun Tzu taught, are doomed to fail when they are applied without detailed and comprehensive knowledge of those whom they are being applied against, or an understanding of how the enemy thinks—and therefore how that foe is likely to respond and, moreover, adapt or adjust to those tactics.

Without knowing our enemy and its environment, we cannot successfully penetrate its cells. We cannot knowledgeably sow discord and dissension in our adversary's ranks and thus weaken the organization from within. And, we cannot fulfill the most basic requirements of an effective counterterrorism strategy: anticipating, preempting and preventing terrorist operations, and especially deterring attack. Without this understanding, moreover, we cannot break the cycle of radicalization and recruitment that replenishes terrorists' ranks and prolongs this debilitating war.

Dangerously, thus far our own policies have led us to appear weak, inconsistent and confused. This is not good for us, neither for the message we send ourselves nor for the effects on the potential al-Qaeda recruits waiting in the wings, summoned by a call to arms against the enervated infidels.

Yet, inconsistency and uncertainty seem to dominate our approach to counterterrorism today. We claim success while al-Qaeda is regrouping and tally killed leaders while more devious plans are being hatched—evinced no more clearly than in the case of that Christmas bomb plot and quick follow-up with the deadly suicide attack at Forward Operating Base Chapman in Afghanistan. A "decimated" terrorist movement "on the run" does not pull off two separate incidents less than a week apart and call into question the effectiveness of our entire national-security architecture. As a seasoned CIA counterterrorism veteran told *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius regarding the Afghanistan suicide attack: "They didn't get lucky, they got good and we got sloppy." Another former senior U.S. intelligence official was similarly quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* commenting that the attack in Khost was "very sophisticated for a terrorist group that's supposedly on the run." Still more perplexing is how Vice President Joe Biden could unequivocally claim that al-Qaeda is "on the run" when the administration's top intelligence officials warned the Senate of an almost "certain" risk of a future al-Qaeda attack just the week before.

The question of whether 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed should be tried in federal criminal court in the Southern District of New York, by military commission at some other location in the United States or at Guantánamo Bay is a critical issue that deserves serious and detailed consideration. But when we suddenly reverse positions based on political pressures, or fears for the security of the trial venue and surrounding area, it is the United States and not al-Qaeda that appears to be on the run—or at least hesitant, fearful and uncer-

tain. This is but one inconsistency that not only confuses the public but also corrodes the policy process, and supplies our enemies with fresh ammunition for their propaganda and recruitment campaigns.

We believe we have been successful in deterring al-Qaeda when events demonstrate the opposite. Unfortunately for us, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the reorganization of the U.S. intelligence community, and the overall strengthening of America's counterterrorism capabilities and security measures over the past nine years have apparently neither disheartened nor deterred our enemy.

The national-security architecture built in the aftermath of 9/11 has shown itself relevant to yesterday's threat—not to today's and certainly not to tomorrow's. It is superbly reactive and responsive but insufficiently perspicacious. With our military overcommitted in Iraq and Afghanistan, and our intelligence community overstretched by multiplying threats, a new approach and a different counterterrorism paradigm is needed if we are to more effectively counter al-Qaeda's strategy of attrition.

One important yet currently languishing congressional initiative that would help counter this strategy is Representative Frank Wolf's proposal to institutionalize a "red team" or "Team B" counterterrorist capability as an essential element of our efforts to combat terrorism and in the war against al-Qaeda. Historically, "Team B" refers to a group of experts outside of government whom the CIA brought together in the 1970s and 1980s to analyze the changing threat posed by the Soviet Union and to challenge the prevailing conventional wisdom within government—in this case the positions of the intelligence community, "Team A." Both the intelligence community and our national-security and law-enforcement agencies are overwhelmed with data, information and a multiplicity of immediate "in-box"-driven issues that continually challenge their ability to think both strategically and in terms of a patently evolving, multidimensional threat. As Representative Wolf has argued, the "Team B" concept would represent a new approach to counterterrorism that would potentially enable the United States to stay one step ahead of our adversaries' own strategy and tactics.

The U.S. government routinely focuses on understanding how American foreign policy affects foreign opinion and attitudes and, specifically, how it may accentuate or exacerbate overseas threats against us. Given the unprecedented number of jihadi or jihadi-related incidents in the United States this past year, new attention also needs to be paid to how American foreign policy affects domestic opinion, attitudes and, unfortunately, even threats emanating from within our country. We must begin to systematically address the threats both at home and abroad.

It seems clear now from the litany of homegrown, near-disastrous incidents that this is a problem of the highest order. And beyond the laundry list of specific cases, over the past year American and British intelligence officers have repeatedly cited at least one hundred terrorists who are believed to have already, in their words, "graduated" from al-Qaeda training camps in Pakistan and deployed to their native and adopted homes to undertake terrorist operations in the West. In retrospect, people like Najibullah Zazi, Bryant Neal Vinas and David Headley were already among this number. Better understanding how our actions are perceived and utilized by the enemy is more urgent than ever.

The United States missed a rare chance to get in front of this issue and potentially

fully understand how Americans are radicalized and recruited to terrorism. Three years ago, Representative Jane Harman introduced House Resolution 1955, the "Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007," which would have established a national commission to study domestic terrorism. Although the bill easily passed the House of Representatives, it never came to a vote in the Senate. Admittedly, the last thing Washington needs is another commission. But at the same time, it seems bipartisan commissions are the only way our government can accomplish anything terrorism related. In this case, such a body would have provided a baseline assessment of terrorist radicalization and recruitment processes, and made policy recommendations about how to counter them by drawing on a comprehensive survey of the experiences and best practices of other countries—and by better understanding how terrorist groups might target and attract Americans and U.S. residents to their ranks.

Given that the terrorist threat has changed so appreciably since the 9/11 Commission concluded its work six years ago, we require the same fresh look and new approaches that would have been the Harman commission's remit. Clearly, another congressional confab by its nature cannot defeat al-Qaeda, but it can provide a comprehensive review and identify the changes needed to more effectively counter al-Qaeda, and perhaps enable us to finally turn a decisive corner in our ongoing struggle against terrorism.

Further, one of the recommendations from the 9/11 Commission that has continually gone unaddressed pertains specifically to congressional oversight. As Lee Hamilton—the distinguished former congressman and co-chair of the 9/11 Commission—has often argued, more than eighty committees and subcommittees currently have jurisdiction over these issues: an absurdly large and duplicative amalgamation that contributes to the inconsistency that has permeated our counterterrorism strategy and policies. A potential model for a more streamlined government operation is the Intelligence and Security Committee created over fifteen years ago by the British House of Commons. Members of that committee are among the most senior members of Parliament. Many have detailed experience with these issues both as a result of their long service in the legislature and through holding key ministerial positions. They are therefore highly versed and extremely knowledgeable, if not expert, in matters of intelligence, counterterrorism and homeland security. Thus, the ability of Britain's legislative branch to exercise informed and directed oversight of the UK's intelligence and security agencies through one entity speaking with a single voice is enhanced appreciably. We would be well served to emulate this practice.

America's counterterrorism strategy has long been weighted toward a "kill or capture" approach targeting individual bad guys. It has also been erroneously based on the assumption that America's contemporary enemies—be they al-Qaeda or the Taliban—have a traditional center of gravity, and that they simply need to be killed or imprisoned for global terrorism and the Afghan insurgency to end. Accordingly, the attention of the U.S. military and intelligence community remains directed almost uniformly toward hunting down militant leaders, not toward understanding the enemies we face and the environment they come from, operate in and depend upon. This is a monumental failing, not only because decapitation strategies alone have rarely worked in curtailing terrorist or insurgent campaigns without effectively countering radicalization and recruitment

processes, but also because al-Qaeda's and the Taliban's respective abilities to continue their struggles are indisputably predicated on their capacity to attract new recruits and supporters, thereby replenishing their resources.

Addressing this gap in our existing strategy is more critical than ever given the need to adjust and adapt to changes we see in the behavior and operations of our adversaries, who are far too elusive and complicated to be vanquished by mere decapitation. An effective response will thus ineluctably be based upon a strategy that effectively combines the tactical elements of systematically destroying and weakening enemy capabilities (continuing to kill and capture terrorists and insurgents) and the equally critical, broader strategic imperative of breaking the cycle of terrorist and insurgent recruitment that has sustained both al-Qaeda's continued campaign and the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan.

Until we dissemble the demand side—the persistent resonance of al-Qaeda's message and its capacity to engage in the continued radicalization of a new cadre—we will never be able to stanch the supply side: the thinning, but still formidably adequate bench of key al-Qaeda operatives waiting in the wings to succeed their deceased or imprisoned predecessors.

And until we recognize the importance of these vital prerequisites, America will remain perennially on the defensive: inherently reactive rather than proactive and deprived of the capacity to recognize, much less anticipate, important changes in our enemy's recruitment and radicalization processes, its support apparatus, and its targeting strategies and modus operandi.

The war on terrorism has now lasted longer than America's involvement in World Wars I and II combined. That we are still equally far from winning cries out for precisely the knowledge that we have neglected. We would do well to remember Sun Tzu's other famous dictum that "tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat." □